

Monthly Broadcast Helps Educators Implement Wellness Policies

Issue

S.C. teachers lead busy lives these days teaching important academic skills, constantly weaving new standards into their lessons and facing an increasing level of accountability. Educators are already overburdened with myriad daily tasks so the addition of meeting new nutrition and physical activity requirements can be overwhelming.

However, South Carolina needs teachers' help because the state's rates of childhood overweight and obesity are among the highest in the nation. In South Carolina, 368,000 children and adolescents are classified as overweight or obese and this is 5% higher than the national average. Two recent acts, The Child Nutrition and Women, Infants, and Children Reauthorization Act of 2004 and the S.C. Student Health and Fitness Act of 2005, required schools implement new measures to decrease poor nutrition and physical inactivity. Both are designed to address the growing obesity epidemic in the United States and South Carolina.

Intervention

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control Region 3 (DHEC) partnered with the State Department of Education (SDE) and South Carolina Instructional and Educational Television (SC ITV/ETV) beginning in 2005 to develop a series of professional development programs for teachers, administrators and food service workers to assist them in putting policies into action without taking them out of the classroom for extended periods. The monthly program, *School Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity: Making It Happen*, explores wellness policies that went into effect for the 2006-07 school year. Specifically, the program:

- Is broadcast to teachers each month on ITV and can also be accessed online;
- May be used for professional development only or schools can register through ITV to use the telecourse for re-certification credit;
- Includes topics such as physical activity, obesity, nutrition guidelines, curriculum and resources available to the schools;
- Highlights successful programs being implemented in schools and provides information on ways schools can incorporate these programs into daily activity; and
- Features guests such as, Dr. Kellie O'Connell of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), who presented several segments on the food guide pyramid and dietary guidelines to be used in the programs.

The lessons are hosted and coordinated by Susan Collier MS, RD of DHEC Region 3, in collaboration with the other partners. Susan's role in this collaboration is supported by the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant.

Impact

As a result of the innovative partnerships the following results were achieved:

- The project is in year three and regularly broadcasts to more than 1,100 schools statewide;
- The programs and school success stories are available on the Internet at www.knowitall.org/healthy. The visits to this site increased from 998 per month in October 2006 when the site launched to 3,002 in March 2007;
- Teachers can take the course for recertification credit; and
- The program received the Healthy South Carolina Challenge award for media accomplishment.

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